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UNCLAS GUATEMALA 001173

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [SNAR](#) [SENV](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [GT](#)
SUBJECT: GUATEMALAN AMBUSH LEAVES AN ARMY CAPTAIN AND A
POLICE OFFICER WOUNDED, HOSTAGES SEIZED

¶1. (SBU) Summary: A heavily armed group of 40 men ambushed a joint patrol of Guatemalan army, police and park rangers. They wounded two men and are, as of noon June 15, still holding hostage three others in northwestern corner of the Peten. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) A 40-man joint patrol of the Guatemalan environmental and forest protection agency (CONAP), Guatemalan Army, and Guatemalan National Civilian Police (PNC) was ambushed at noon on June 14 in the Sierra del Lacandon National Park in northwestern Guatemala near the Guatemala-Mexico border. The patrol had entered the area in response to a report of "environmental depredation." The attackers, a heavily-armed group of about 40 men, wounded the Captain in charge of the 22 military members of the patrol as well as one of the six agents of the PNC's Natural Resource Protection Unit (DIPRONA). The attackers held the two wounded men hostage for two hours before exchanging them for three of the CONAP rangers and the PNC Inspector in charge of the DIPRONA contingent. Two of the CONAP rangers and the PNC Inspector continue to be held hostage.

¶3. (SBU) A GOG delegation that includes the Governor of the Peten and the Brigadier General in Commander of the Army's First Brigade in Flores will fly up to the area as soon as the weather clears. Weather conditions prevented medevac of the two casualties by helicopter. Instead they were taken by boat on the Usumacinta River to an army post in Bethel, approximately 35 miles to the southeast of the ambush site of Arroyo Macabilero.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: Military sources tell us that the attackers appear to be engaged in illegal logging but may also be one of the groups providing ground support to clandestine drug flights. Both the Sierra del Lacandon National Park and its more well-known northern counterpart the Laguna del Tigre National Park are threatened by squatters, illegal loggers and drug traffickers. These groups are difficult to distinguish as they overlap and all tend to carry AK-47s. Joint patrols are not unusual. The Army-run Interagency Task Force North (ITFN) in the Peten works very closely with CONAP and also enjoys good cooperation from the Police DIPRONA agents assigned to work under its direction.
Derham